Celebrating 25 years of the ‘new’ opera house
Improvements to the space backstage also opened up new possibilities for what Glyndebourne could achieve on stage, enabling the company to present some of its biggest and most ambitious productions – including *Eugene Onegin*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and *Billy Budd* – over the past 25 years. But what is the new opera house like for singers? How does it compare with the old, much-loved original opera house? *Karen Anderson* spoke to a few Glyndebourne favourites, who have sung in the old and new house, to find out what this big change meant to them.

The new opera house opened on 28 May 1994 with a performance of Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro*, the same opera that opened the very first Glyndebourne Festival in 1934. In the title role was Gerald Finley. Having sung in the old house (his last performance was in Festival 1992’s *Cosi fan tutte*) he had great anticipation for the new one as he explains:

‘Arriving for rehearsals for *Figaro* in April 1994, there was the jaw-dropping moment coming down the road – beholding a sort of Star Trek vision of burnt red brick, with a slate grey top. There were earth piles everywhere, but also a building of some impressive magnitude. The new Glyndebourne! The theatre had been closed since August 1992, Britain had left the
Exchange Rate Mechanism [September 1992], and interest rates had climbed to historic highs. It was not a great time to be in the building industry as many projects were put on hold; except at Glyndebourne, where, through 1993 while concerts and other events took place instead of a season, building works and craftsmen were steaming on in the construction of the new theatre.

‘Among the keenest to know what it was to be like were the singers who had sung in the previous seasons. New theatres had notorious reputations for delivering the public areas and conveniences in modern fashion, but acoustics and facilities for the artists always seemed to become first on the “cost-saving” list.

‘Those of us in the first production of Le nozze di Figaro were excited to be the first into the new theatre. The production was to be based on the former one by Peter Hall, but in fact, under the expert guidance of director Stephen Medcalf, and adapted minimal sets by John Gunter, the production became a totally new one, thrusting the new theatre into relief. ‘We were terrifically excited to get into the theatre proper for stage rehearsals. Although we were at first skeptical of the new horseshoe-shaped auditorium (it looked a bit broad), as people began to come into rehearsals and listen, the impression from the stage was that the intimacy had been cleverly preserved and the sound of the singing was ringing very sweetly indeed. The warm colour of the wood and the refined lighting was a far cry from the straight and white walls of the previous theatre, with its sloping roof.

Backstage, there was space for sets and depth for modern machinery to make it a real modern house. The resonance was like a classic theatre of the classic age, generous to the voice. The pit could house a big orchestra, and yet was not too exposed for a large space. The musicians could hear the stage very well, and this was immediately valuable in rehearsals. The engineers had done their work skilfully. Overall, the theatre was a triumph for us performers, and the warm reception afforded us after the performance and worldwide relay was as much for the hearty welcome of the new performing space as for the opera.’

Initially, Felicity Lott was worried. She had such a strong attachment to the old theatre that she felt the new theatre could not match it as she explains: ‘I loved the old Glyndebourne. I felt so much a part of the place, and so safe and secure. I sang there almost every year from 1976 until the late 1990s [she first appeared in Capriccio in the Tour in 1976, and her last performance was in Albert Herring, 2002].

I remember the shock of the first stage and orchestra rehearsal for Capriccio in 1976; the acoustic was so dry and I screamed my way through, thinking that no-one would hear me, but when I got used to it, I learned that everything carried very well in that intimate setting, and that there was no need to bellow – it was counterproductive in fact. [The old theatre] was sometimes unbearably hot – in Arabella in the height of summer, we were wearing clothes designed for sleigh-riding in Siberia.

I remember telling dear George that I thought he was making a big mistake in demolishing this wonderful place where I grew up... History has proved him so right and me so wrong! But I still meet people who remember the old house with great affection, while acknowledging that the ‘new’ one is much more comfortable – and it’s a joy to sing on that stage.

Henry Waddington made his solo debut in the new house during the Festival in 1994. Having sung in the Chorus in the last season of the old house, he ‘remembers well the opera gala and the demolition going on about us.’ Then in 1994 ‘I returned to take on the role of the Madhouse Keeper in John Cox’s iconic production of The Rake’s Progress and I still remember the thrill of singing in that amazing space for the first time with its incredible acoustic. The new backstage
facilities and that incredible auditorium were in a class of their own.’

John Graham-Hall shares his great fondness for the old house: ‘In 1992, the last season in the old theatre, I sang in the first run of Trevor Nunn’s Peter Grimes, and in 1994 we revived the show in the new theatre. The claustrophobic feel of John Gunter’s “Toytown” sets, so perfect for the self-obsessed “Borough”, was extraordinarily powerful in the old building, where the temperature on a summer’s day, not to mention the ever-present “Glyndebourne smell” of unblessed memory, would create exactly the sense of stuffy discomfort Britten must have envisaged. I always felt the production never quite achieved that same febrile atmosphere in the new theatre. But the rosy glow which I suspect pervades all our memories of that iconic (old) building shouldn’t blind us to the magnificent space which is George’s “new” theatre. The acoustic is rounder and much kinder to the human voice, as well as to the orchestra – as friendly and comfortable a place to sing as I know anywhere in the world. I will never forget the opening night – Figaro this time. As the Count promised us all in Act III, there were real fireworks. Can that really be 25 years ago?’

During the 1980s it became clear that Glyndebourne needed a larger auditorium to meet audience demand and a larger backstage area to accommodate ever more technically demanding productions. In 1987 George Christie announced the idea of building a completely new, larger, opera house.

The building was designed by architects Michael Hopkins and Partners. Their brief was to design a building that could blend into its surroundings whilst still being of its time; increase capacity while retaining a sense of intimacy; integrate the finest possible acoustics and improve facilities for staff, singers and audience. There was also a strict time and budget limit.

Construction began immediately after the curtain fell on the 1991 Festival and continued throughout the 1992 season when work would finish at 4.00pm on performance days. Only one Festival season, in 1993, was missed and the build was completed on time and within budget.

The new opera house was the first purpose-built opera house to be constructed in the UK since John Christie built the original Glyndebourne theatre in the 1930s.

The theatre has won many awards for the quality of the architecture as a whole, and for the craftsmanship of its component parts. It is built from load-bearing, imperial size handmade bricks. The fly tower is a steel structure clad in lead. Acid-washed pre-cast concrete has been used for floors and ceilings. The horseshoe shaped auditorium has been crafted out of century-old pitch pine. Despite the addition of an extra 400 seats the auditorium has not lost its intimacy, in fact the back wall is six feet closer to the stage than in the old house. It boasts excellent sightlines and the acoustic is vastly improved.

The house that George built
Made possible thanks to funding from our Founder Members

COST £34m • SEATS 1,200 • AUDITORIUM 60ft high, 84ft deep
ORCHESTRA PIT AREA 100 m² • STAGE DEPTH 17.7m
Felicity Lott as Lady Billows in *Albert Herring*, 2002


Gerald Finley as Figaro in 1994’s *Le nozze de Figaro*, which opened the new theatre
We learn a lot about Faust from the genesis of the work's title page. Originally inscribed with the words 'opera en concert', it was adapted multiple times before the composer was satisfied. Berlioz first replaced his initial thought with the more abstract 'Légende', before finally changing it to 'Légende dramatique'. These revisions and rethinkings reveal something of the pioneering, exploratory spirit of a composer making up the musical rules as he went along, thinking stubbornly outside the wooden box of the 19th-century theatre.

Such innovations puzzled the audience at the work's 1845 premiere, who were unsure what to make of this ambitious, unfamiliar hybrid between opera, oratorio and cantata, and it wasn't until after the composer's death that Faust began to be appreciated on its own terms.

Although major European stagings by La Fura dels Baus (Salzburg, 2000), Terry Gilliam (2011, London) and Damiano Michieletto (Rome, 2017) have more recently begun to explore the theatrical possibilities the piece offers, relocating it from its original concert hall home to the opera house, embracing the work's challenges and exploiting the new technological and physical capacity of today's theatres, Faust is still an outsider, slightly detached from the repertoire – only rarely seen in fully staged productions.

Why? The sheer scale and scope of the piece – not just dramatically but also musically – is as daunting as any opera by Wagner or Strauss. The tone is set by a large orchestra which, in the absence of stage action, were originally expected to take the listener from heaven down to hell, to conjure visions of demons and drunkards, spring meadows and angelic choirs. Add to that an equally sizeable chorus, whose music not only accounts for around a third of Faust's duration but also makes extraordinary demands of its singers, who must turn their hand from riotous drinking songs to pseudo-academic fugues, appearing by turns as peasants, soldiers, students, devils and angels in a score that is all but a concerto for chorus.

It's a score the Glyndebourne Chorus is uniquely well-placed to tackle. The textural variety and many moods of the vocal writing will showcase not only the technical virtuosity but also the power of this exceptional group of solo-quality voices. They will join the London Philharmonic Orchestra under the direction of Robin Ticciati, a passionate advocate for Berlioz's music, already responsible for bringing the composer's charming Béatrice et Bénédict to Glyndebourne – a work whose filigree delicacy couldn't be further from the sprawling spectacle of Faust.

Part love-story, part cautionary tale, part
philosophical manifesto, Faust explodes out of the confines of any genre you try to put it into. In the concert-hall it plays almost like a musical montage, a widescreen musical journey from sardonic comedy to spiritual ecstasy that flashes past in a blur of colour and sensation. In the intimate environment of the Glyndebourne opera house, the audience will be drawn in close to a richly detailed score, able to observe the minute textural shading the composer of the Symphonie Fantastique brings to another large-scale canvas. The sheer physical impact promises to be overwhelming, but also invites a new perspective on a piece that is so much more than just musical shock and awe.

Richard Jones’ new production brings together two Glyndebourne favourites – singing-actors who will grapple with the fascinating psychological relationship at the heart of the piece. Tenor Allan Clayton (making his role debut as Faust) will go head-to-head with baritone Christopher Purves as smooth-talking devil Méphistophélès in a dramatic and musical battle of wills that maps a man’s descent from joyless self-restraint into the sinful delights of wickedness and degradation.

It’s a musical battle not just for the soul of one man but of mankind itself – a tussle over faith, love, identity and the Romantic dream that ends, with magnificent cruelty, in ruin and spectacular conflagration. They say the devil has all the best tunes, and nobody hearing the sensuous, decadent horror of Berlioz’s La damnation de Faust could argue with that.

Alexandra Coghlan is Glyndebourne’s Opera Content Consultant

‘Members and donors are the lifeblood. When they decide that they are going to be generous enough to give money, in some respects it provides us with an impetus, with an incentive to make the opera as good as possible. And I think it is in many respects unique in the opera world.’

Christopher Purves

‘Members are part of this wider family that draws us back year after year, if we’re lucky enough to be asked to be here. You do feel that you’re stepping somewhere special, that you’re watching a show somewhere special, that you’re rehearsing somewhere special. So I think to be a Member is to be even more deeply involved in that. Simply the place doesn’t function without singers, without technical staff and without Members.’

Allan Clayton
Creating art inspired by opera

With any new production it is always difficult to know how to represent the opera. For the last few years we have commissioned a new piece of artwork for our main stage community operas including *Imago* and *Nothing*. To continue our commitment to nurturing emerging talent we commissioned Katie Ponder, the winner of the 2017 Tour Art Competition, to design the artwork for *Agreed*. She talked to Charlotte Alldis about the process of creating art inspired by opera.

How did you get into art and illustration?
I have always been creative but it was my year at Camberwell Art School that opened up the world of illustration to me. I enjoyed creating artwork that was intended to tell a story or convey a message. I went on to complete an Illustration degree at Falmouth University where I thoroughly enjoyed the three years I had experimenting with different methods of creating art, and defining my own style.

What has inspired you to create art over the years?
Art began as a happy indulgence at school, but developed into my real passion during art school. I find a wonderful sense of satisfaction and fulfilment when an illustration comes together. I enjoy so much going into my own world, and thinking of ways to depict an idea. Enjoying what I do is what keeps me inspired, and during the times I have a creative dry spell, my stubbornness takes over and I push through all the bad ideas until finally a good one emerges (hopefully)!

My favourite place to find inspiration is at the ballet or the opera. I love the costumes and set designs (the sneak peaks of the stunning *Agreed* set was so exciting!). The way performers express themselves through their voices and body language also fascinates me. I turn to musicians and composers when I need a mental boost, typically Stravinsky, Mozart, Joni Mitchell or Tori Amos.

What was the first step to creating this artwork?
Firstly, I read the libretto; it’s such a powerful and relevant story that I was instantly gripped and excited by it. Cordelia Chisholm (the designer) shared images of the set design with me, which helped spark ideas, and enabled me to create a design consistent with the atmosphere of the production.

Is the final product what you had imagined/hoped it would look like?
I avoid setting expectations when creating art. I work at my best when approaching an illustration with an open mind, focusing on the message I would like to convey. I allow the image to evolve organically, adding things and taking things away, until something clicks and the piece feels complete. I loved creating the work for *Agreed*; it is a very topical story at a time when immigration and borders are talked about with such aggression. I hoped to convey the feelings of longing, separation and diaspora that are central to the *Agreed* story.

Charlotte Alldis is Glyndebourne’s Senior Marketing Manager

The 2019 Glyndebourne Tour Art Competition has just launched. Entries are welcomed by 5 July on the theme of ‘Lost and Found’ – full details of this competition for new artists can be found at glyndebourne.com/tourart
Above: *Agreed* artwork. Below: Katie Ponder with her winning cover for the 2017 Tour Art Competition
Movement at the top

Last spring Glyndebourne changed its management structure placing a managing director (MD) and artistic director (AD) at the top of its management tree reporting into Executive Chairman, Gus Christie. **Sarah Hopwood**, having worked at Glyndebourne for 21 years as Finance Director, then Chief Operating Officer was appointed MD. **Eleanor Crawforth** caught up with her to find out how her first year is going.

*Can you tell us a little bit about the new management structure at Glyndebourne – what areas will you as MD be responsible for, and Stephen Langridge as the new AD look after?*

The new management structure was implemented in March 2018 and obviously the first big challenge was to recruit an artistic director, so we are very excited that we have Stephen [Langridge] starting this March. The AD is responsible for the artistic vision, and that’s absolutely at the heart of what we do; we are a charity that exists to deliver opera in the broadest sense, and that is Stephen’s responsibility. My responsibility is to ensure very broadly that we have the resource in place to deliver that vision.

*How is it going so far, and is there anything you’re looking forward to that you haven’t worked on before?*

I’ve had nine months to get used to this, and in a way I was thrown in at the deep end because we didn’t have an AD in place. I’m not suggesting for a minute that I’ve contributed to the artistic vision, because I absolutely haven’t. The good news was that I didn’t have to, because our artistic strategy is already planned through to 2021, so it was very much business as usual. The challenge for me over the summer was first and foremost to get out around the company and get to know staff even better. As Finance Director I always had a slight sense that people would feel nervous if I was seeking them out, that I would have some hidden agenda, which actually, in truth I never did! But as MD, I think people want to feel that there is a leader, someone who knows ultimately what is going on, someone who cares, someone who is taking responsibility. It was a privilege for me to have this opportunity.

I started an internal staff newsletter the very first month I was in post as I felt it was important that people got to know what I thought was important and what I thought was important and what I care about. I have really encouraged staff to contribute to this too because again, all of our voices are important. I’ve also made it clear that my door is always open and on a Friday afternoon I’ve encouraged staff to come and talk to me about absolutely anything they want to, business-related or otherwise, and it’s been fascinating for me to hear the things that people worry about and are proud of, and I’ve had some great conversations.

The other big difference is that I spent a lot of time this summer pre-performance in the Old Green Room, getting to know our donors better, because a big part of my new role will be contributing to the fundraising challenge and forming friendships and partnerships with our donors and Members.

*Is there anything that will fundamentally change as part of the new structure – that Members will become aware of?*

I hope not, because the change in management structure shouldn’t really affect what we’ve always tried to do. We are always looking to develop and enhance the experience for
everyone – for Members, staff, creative teams, artists and audiences – and that ambition shouldn’t change. Obviously I hope that we will be ever-more efficient and continue to identify opportunities. People will see changes physically on site, but I don’t think those are as a result of the change in structure; I suppose the only difference is that now there’s no one I can blame if these things don’t happen. I have to take responsibility. It’s my fault if they don’t.

You’ve played a significant part in the building of the new Production Hub – what was your role in this and did you have to move out of your comfort zone? Was it fun to work on a completely new and different project?

It was a big capital project, the biggest since the rebuilding of the opera house 25 years ago. I have been involved in big capital projects in my previous life so I wasn’t daunted by it. Of course, it’s a lot of money and there are challenges; we had to build it within a very tight timeframe. Eric [Gautron, Technical Director] and I are responsible for the project. Right from the start it has been an absolutely fantastic process and incredibly collaborative, which has been great. Writing the spec was done in collaboration with all of the teams who will be working in the building: props, carpenters, costumes, wigs, make up. Once we’d agreed on the spec, we went out to tender for the architect, then the rest of the design team and ultimately the contractor. There have been challenges both in terms of money and time, and as a building progresses, you see the space evolving and think about how you’re actually going to use each area, changes are inevitable. We were very keen to future-proof; to have the flexibility to accommodate the latest technology. The other thing we set out to achieve from the start is BREEAM Excellent rating [Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method, which assesses the sustainability of buildings], so that this building is as environmentally friendly as it is possible to be, and we’re confident we will achieve that. That has involved, wherever possible, making use of natural ventilation, heating, cooling, roof lights, LED lighting, having windows in the right place to get the most appropriate light for a specific type of work, etc. It has been a fascinating project, I’ve learnt a lot and I think we’ll all be very proud of the finished product. We will be starting guided tours for Members from the spring.

How long have you worked at Glyndebourne and what have your highlights been?

I joined in October 1997, so just over 21 years, which is incredible. I trained as a chartered accountant and worked out in Hong Kong for a few years, then after leaving the profession, I worked in a big multinational in a finance role. Opera has been a passion since I was a child. I have absolutely no musical talent whatsoever, but my father sang in an opera group when we lived in Cheshire so I saw a lot of opera, and I sang in the chorus when I was a teenager, lowering the average age quite considerably! I played the viola and the guitar, though as I say, with no talent. My husband is an actor and we’ve always been to a lot of theatre, opera and concerts. I saw this job advertised in The Sunday Times and thought it was too good an opportunity to miss, bringing together my financial background and training with my passion for opera. I was lucky enough to get it, and the rest is history.

One of my main highlights has been the opportunity to work with such a range of creative people, very different from my previous life, and that has been a privilege. Every time I sit in the opera house I feel a great thrill, and I
suppose when I stop feeling that way, it will be time to leave. There have been many favourite memories over the years, and two stand out. On 31 December 1999 (when I had been here just over two years) it was Sir George Christie’s 65th birthday, which coincided with the Millennium. We had a huge, spectacular birthday party for him on the stage, which my husband and I were lucky enough to be invited to. No one had to worry about childcare because there was a giant sleepover for all the children; we just had to bring a sleeping bag and they ate popcorn and watched movies all night. Whatever Glyndebourne does, whether it’s a performance for the Festival or Tour – or it’s a cold December day and we’re hosting the Big Sing, with over 600 schoolchildren from across East Sussex performing on the main stage – Glyndebourne does well, and that birthday party was no exception.

My other highlight is the event we held at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London on 4 December last year to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Glyndebourne Tour. The concert featured some incredible singers who started their careers at Glyndebourne, as well as the Glyndebourne Chorus and Tour orchestra, conductor Louis Langrée – who contributed so much to the Tour as its music director in the late 1990s – and Ben Glassberg, who has just been announced as our first Tour Principal Conductor. It was followed by a spectacular dinner for 400 guests. It was another great Glyndebourne production and I felt immensely proud and lucky to be part of it.

_Could you list your top 5 Glyndebourne operas?_

The top one is easy – _Billy Budd_. I will never get the Glyndebourne production of it out of my head. Then _Jenůfa_: when I first started here I was not familiar with Janáček at all, but I am now well and truly hooked. Next, _Rusalka_ and _Peter Grimes_. I can’t say a fifth because after those I have a layer of operas that I’ve absolutely loved. It’s always very exciting when the Festival starts and we have new productions – to see them developing during the rehearsal period. My children believe that every year I say ‘ahh, that’s absolutely my favourite opera!’ But I can say with confidence that _Billy Budd_ is my absolute favourite opera.

_Finally, if you were an opera character who would it be and why?_

Carmen. She’s up there on the wall of my office (the image is of Anne Sofie von Otter in David McVicar’s 2002 Glyndebourne production). I feel it’s such a well-known opera, I know the music incredibly well, it was an opera I sang in as a teenager. I’m not necessarily saying I aspire to those morals or anything else, but just in terms of talent... I just thought Anne Sofie von Otter was absolutely incredible. I relate working at Glyndebourne, beside so many talented people, to being part of a wonderful production like that – the incredible music, wonderful costumes – and I find Carmen’s strength of character inspiring!

_Eleanor Crawforth_ is Glyndebourne’s Media Officer
Sarah Hopwood, Managing Director

Stephen Langridge, Artistic Director
Stephen Langridge is Glyndebourne’s new Artistic Director. Prior to taking up his new post in March, he spoke to Karen Anderson about his (already quite long) connections with Glyndebourne.

We are welcoming you back to Glyndebourne – can you tell us what you did when you worked here before?
My first job at Glyndebourne was in 1987 when I ran masses of one-off workshops in schools on The Marriage of Figaro and The Barber of Seville, and then introduced the performances in the old house for all the children who came to the Kent and East Sussex Schools week before the Tour. I did a kind of “Hi kids, welcome to Glyndebourne...” and then interviewed someone in the interval. Fun. After that, over the next 15 years or so, I was involved in many creative projects in schools, and also in HMP Lewes. This led to directing several community and youth operas including Misper and Zoe both by John Lunn and Stephen Plaice (don’t get me wrong, but this was a team which formed in prison!)

Why did you want to come back? Is there anything you missed?
I have been living happily in Gothenburg, Sweden with my family for the past few years while I have been working as Artistic Director for the (excellent) opera company. I had thought I’d simply go back to freelance directing when I left, but when the opportunity of joining Glyndebourne was offered I couldn’t resist. I have told my colleagues here in Sweden that this is the ONLY job I would leave for, and I mean it. I feel a deep connection with Glyndebourne, through the work I have done here which has, in part, formed me as an artist, and through my connections through my dad. It’s particularly exciting to be coming back during the celebrations of the [new] house’s quarter century (coincidentally, the opera house in Gothenburg also opened in 1994).

Do you think a robust education programme is integral to the success of an opera house?
In short, yes. But I’d also turn the question around to give a slightly different answer. I think that access to, and participation in music and theatre for people of all ages is crucial for the health of society. I also believe that opera is the most accessible and immediate of all performance art forms. Participating in opera, as audience or performer helps build creativity, empathy and imagination: three human characteristics, vital for our future; three vital characteristics which sometimes seem in short supply and need nurturing. Glyndebourne leads the way in this area, and is in a good position to continue to develop the work, enriching the lives of individuals and communities through opera. An opera company that achieves such engagement could certainly be called a success.

What does Glyndebourne mean to you?
True story: I took my first steps on the Glyndebourne lawns. My dad was singing in the Chorus in 1964, [Philip Langridge sang at Glyndebourne until 2003] I suppose he was rehearsing, and mum and I were hanging out on the lawns. There is no photographic evidence, and I have no memory of the great event... but (according to my mum) it happened. The other anecdote from that time was how I howled with fear when I was introduced to the ladies’ chorus, who were painted green as witches in Verdi’s Macbeth. An early trauma, from which I have now recovered. Then over the years I came to see many of the productions in which my dad sang – particularly clear in my memory are his Ottavio (Don Giovanni), Idomeneo (Idomeneo)
and then Florestan (Fidelio) on the Tour. Later Birtwistle’s The Second Mrs Kong stands out: dad and I also ran schools’ workshops together in Manchester on that opera. I’ve mentioned my work with the education department, but some of the most amazing performances I have experienced as an audience member have been at Glyndebourne. The list is long, but at the top is Lorraine Hunt Lieberson in Peter Sellars’ production of Theodora. That stands in my memory, as transformative opera at its best. Perhaps I am being sentimental, but I do think you’d find clear Glyndebourne traces in my personal and artistic DNA.

You join Glyndebourne from Gothenburg Opera and fresh from directing the Ring Cycle, do you have any plans to direct opera productions here?
I plan to continue directing elsewhere (three more bits of the Ring to go in Gothenburg), but at Glyndebourne I want to focus on programming and curating other people’s productions, both for the Festival and on Tour: never say never, of course, but no plans to direct anything myself currently. In Gothenburg I can direct an opera, and still be available to support the next production, which starts rehearsal after the premiere: in the Glyndebourne Festival the work is so concentrated that several operas are rehearsing at once, and I want to be able to support and engage directly with all the work we present.

As Glyndebourne plans its seasons in advance you’ll be planning your first season from 2022 onwards, is there anything you’d love to see on the Glyndebourne stage that we’ve never presented before?
Yes. There are several wonderful operas, which will work brilliantly at Glyndebourne. And there are other pieces to which we should return and take a fresh look. And definitely some new commissions too. But my lips are sealed… as my Granny always said, when we wanted to know what was for afters, ‘it’s wait-and-see-pudding today’.

What music do you listen to on your phone? If you had ‘shuffle’ on what five songs/tunes are we most likely to hear?
Sorry to break this to you, but I never listen to music on my phone, and shuffle drives me mad. While cooking I listen to Glen Gould playing Bach, Bossa Nova (especially Elis Regina) and James Brown. Or better: I give my daughters control of the music.

If you were a character in an opera who would you be?
This is the type of question that can come back to haunt you. A quick family conversation has offered up some spectacularly inappropriate suggestions, which I will not relate here. But a character I’d like to be like is Susanna. Daughters’ response when I explain why (she’s smart, fun, risk taking, subversive): ‘sounds like you are in love with her – you’d better be Figaro.’ OK, I’ll settle for that.

What is your favourite opera?
I have so many favourites. Birtwistle’s Mask of Orpheus. Le nozze di Figaro, which is near perfect. Monteverdi’s L’Orfeo. Tomorrow the list might be different.

What is the first opera you ever listened to/saw?
I imagine I saw bits of many as a very young child, but the earliest I actually remember seeing are Alexander Goehr’s Naboth’s Vinyard in a double bill with Monteverdi’s Combattimento. How’s that for niche? A quick Google search reveals that was either in 1968 or 1969. I was five: what were my parents trying to do to me? No wonder I became an opera nerd teenager!

Any other questions?
If you have a question for Sarah and Stephen please get in touch with the Membership team. We’ll include responses to some of your questions in a future issue of your Member Newsletter.
Ensuring sustainability and provenance

In fulfilling its remit to source fresh ingredients locally where possible, caterers Leith’s at Glyndebourne support many small producers and businesses. One such local supplier is Brighton & Newhaven Fish Sales (BNFS). Karen Anderson spoke to their Director Kier Foster about sustainable fishing along the south coast and the importance of the Glyndebourne contract to their business.
Part of what makes Glyndebourne special is its location. As well as offering an inspirational setting for audiences and artists, this corner of Sussex is home to some outstanding local food producers – and being only ten miles from the sea has substantial benefits. If you order cod, sole, lobster, monkfish or mackerel from a Leith’s restaurant menu this summer it has been caught by one of BNFS’s fleet of small day boats.

Kier Foster notes that their contract with Leith’s ‘is a big thing for us.’ Having secured the contract three years ago ‘we take a lot of care to ensure the fish we supply is of the best quality. We’ve worked with Julian Wilson [Leith’s Regional Executive Chef] for many years in different venues so we discuss the menus with him, and have a great relationship.’

Based in Shoreham Harbour, BNFS fish along the south coast from Selsey (near Portsmouth) to Eastbourne, employs 51 permanent staff and about 150-200 fishermen and women each week on their own boats. Foster notes ‘we are a mixed fishery which means we catch over 30 different species of fish in our waters and 90 per cent of the boats are owner-operated. The fleet is made up of small inshore dayboats that land their catch within hours of capture, ensuring the fish is fresh and of the highest quality.’

However, this clear and simple business model took a bit of effort and blue-sky thinking to establish. Back in the late 1970s the company was set up by Peter Leach, whose family had been catching and selling fish in Brighton for over 50 years. When his wife won the football pools they were able to buy their own boat and finally work for themselves. But, as Foster explains, ‘Peter was unhappy with the price he was getting for his catch and believed he could improve the situation for himself, his friends and fellow fishermen. He realised he could get a better price for the fish if he had various avenues across the UK and Europe to sell fish to, he persuaded others by guaranteeing them a better price for each catch which created the very first fish market on the Sussex coast.’

He was quickly successful and the business grew because it was dedicated to quality and service. Foster notes ‘The business has come a long way since the start. Now all the fish landed by our fleet is sorted, electronically graded and weighed, before it is offered for sale to our clients. This dedication to quality has helped build our reputation locally and nationally.’

As has BNFS’s adherence to quotas and sustainability as Foster adds: ‘Sustainability is defined as the practice of ensuring the needs of today do not jeopardise or deplete the resources for the future. There are numerous rules and regulations managing the fishing industry aimed at achieving a sustainable future; one such example being quotas and catch limits set by the European Union in accordance with scientific evidence. Fish caught compliant with these regulations is deemed sustainable. We are able to give our clients a guaranteed provenance that all fish purchased is caught within the quota limits set by the EU and is therefore sustainable and this enables us to guarantee the provenance of our products which is fairly unique in our industry.’
Orchestrating the orchestras

Down in the depths of the theatre, a stone’s throw from the orchestra pit, is the Music Library office where Charlie Snee visited Head of Music Library and Resources, Martyn Bennett who, in December, could be found planning for the year ahead.

Alongside their numerous other responsibilities, the Music Library staff and Martyn in particular, in his new role heading up the department, have been planning 2019 for the past four years; confirming which orchestra will play which opera, sourcing information on the orchestration (the selection of instruments to play each part), and providing budgets broken down into cost per player per session.

Things really get going in the nine months prior to the opening of a production, when decisions need to be made about which players will be employed for which show. Our house orchestras for the Festival are the London Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO) and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment (OAE), we also have a Tour orchestra, and education projects regularly require orchestras or small ensembles too.

Howard Moody’s brand new opera Agreed, commissioned for the Glyndebourne main stage, kicks off 2019. A chorus of around 80 local auditioned singers will be joined by five professional singers, five world music players, musicians from the OAE, the OAE’s Ann & Peter Law Experience scheme, as well as local auditioned young talented instrumentalists.

The five world musicians appearing on stage (rather than in the pit) are playing instruments I’ve never heard of including the darabuka, kora and udu. So whilst our artistic administration and education departments have been working with the OAE education arm to get the 40 strong orchestra for the pit ready to go, Jonathan Tunnell (Tour Orchestra Manager) has been arranging for masters of these unusual instruments to appear, music memorised, on the Glyndebourne stage.

Sebastian Carpenter (15) is one of the local young musicians. He explains how he got involved: ‘I’ve seen a few of the education operas at Glyndebourne because some of
my friends perform in Glyndebourne Youth Opera. I’d been asking for a long time to play in the orchestra – these large scale operas only happen every three years and you need to be Grade 8-standard, so this was my first opportunity to audition.

For this, I was sent some of the more challenging extracts from Agreed to practise. I was nervous but also excited when I came to the audition, but the people on the panel were really nice to me. Howard Moody treated me like a player in the orchestra and we went through the Agreed extracts. He gave me instructions which I responded to. It was great fun.

I couldn’t wait to hear if I got in and when I did I was so happy. Howard wrote a really nice email about my playing. I’m thrilled to be part of the next big new opera and can’t wait to join the whole team, especially the OAE players. I am hopeful that I’ll get the chance to try out a baroque trumpet – that would be fantastic!’

Unlike the rehearsals for the Festival, the orchestra for Agreed will have extra opportunities to practise together before the sitzprobe (if like me you aren’t fluent in German it translates as ‘seated rehearsal’. It is the first time the orchestra and singers work together, focusing on the music rather than the performance). The first read-through for the orchestra was on 2 December, followed by Sunday rehearsals throughout January and February here at Glyndebourne. This is carried out separately from the singers who have the accompaniment of a répétiteur on piano during their rehearsals. All this practice will pay off for the performances in early March.

Swift on the tail of Agreed is Festival 2019. The first rehearsal for the LPO, playing the first four operas this season, is on 4 May. Ian Jackson, Head of Planning & Company Management, has already scheduled the rehearsals including those in London. The OAE will then begin rehearsing for Die Zauberflöte from 6 July.

The two Festival orchestras operate in a similar way. The LPO tends to be the larger of the two, although it isn’t unknown for the OAE repertoire to require more musicians than you would initially expect. There are four orchestra rehearsals in London for each of the operas. Each of these will be a three-hour session. This is the standard rehearsal length for an orchestra. Overtime arrangements for musicians are in place if sessions run over this.

Some members of the orchestra have already requested practice parts from the Music Library for next summer – requests can vary depending on the player and when they will have time to practice before rehearsals. Those that have to memorise their music, or work more closely with singers (think harpsichordists or cellists playing the continuo in baroque works) will attend earlier rehearsals. This year, a guitarist will also appear on stage in both Il barbiere di Siviglia (Festival) and L’elisir d’amore (Tour), and will rehearse separately with the singers.

For the Tour, Glyndebourne employs Jonathan Tunnell as the orchestra manager. He first played the cello on the Tour in 1991, then as he explains ‘I returned in 1995 and have played in the orchestra ever since. When the manager’s position came up, I applied and was lucky enough to be offered the job. I have now been the Tour orchestra manager for 11 Tours or to be more accurate a player/manager as I still play principal cello.’ The management of the orchestra, which can be made up of up to 65 freelance players, involves contracting the players, managing budgets, dealing with payroll, liaising with conductors and the day-to-day management of the Tour orchestra on the road. ‘We are very fortunate that around 90% of our players return each year making the orchestra one of the most experienced opera orchestras in the country’, he adds.

The Tour experience is varied for each orchestra player as they start off with three weeks at Glyndebourne, before heading out around the country as Jonathan explains: ‘When we go out on the road, conditions can vary widely from theatre to theatre. Each
venue requires a different pit layout which presents huge challenges. Some pits have a lack of space, some are on three different levels, some are open and some enclosed. Fortunately, we have a uniquely patient and adaptable group of musicians, most of whom are well used to each venue and its complexities. Often the people most shocked by the different venues are conductors who have never been to the venue before. We test the balance before each production to ensure everything works well with the stage.’

So what does Tour 2019 have in store? ‘Personally, I am looking forward to bringing another new production to the Tour in 2019 – Verdi’s Rigoletto. This a piece we have never done on the Tour. Also, I adore Handel and Rinaldo is a favourite. Lastly, we are very excited to be going to Liverpool for the first time since I have been part of the Tour.’

Charlie Snee is Glyndebourne’s Membership Coordinator

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**Pit Perfect**

Last year we started our new graduate programme for young instrumentalists joining the Tour Orchestra – Pit Perfect. Nine young instrumentalists were with us on the 2018 Tour as members of the orchestra. They made a wonderful contribution to our work and have learned for the first time about the complexities of playing for opera which requires very different skills from other orchestral playing.

In February 2019 we will be auditioning in order to choose a new group to join the Tour and look forward to welcoming the second group of ten Pit Perfect musicians to the orchestra next autumn.’

Jonathan Tunnell
Tour Orchestra Manager
50 golden years

Festival Society Member John Avery Jones got in touch to let us know that it was 50 years ago that he made his first visit to Glyndebourne with friends with whom he’s enjoyed visits together every year since.

This photo was taken by David Leaver in 1990 and pictures, from left to right, Parveen Leaver (now Professor Dame Parveen Kumar), John Avery Jones, Catherine Avery Jones, Ian Spence, Anne Spence. Sadly, David and Ian have passed away, but the remaining four continue to enjoy their annual visits. We look forward to celebrating this milestone with them in the summer.

Orchestra competition

Both of our Festival orchestras have kindly donated a pair of tickets to one of their forthcoming concerts, each conducted by Glyndebourne’s former Music Director, Vladimir Jurowski.

To be in with a chance of winning one of these pairs of tickets send us your answer to the question below no later than midday on Friday 15 February 2019 to:

Email: membership@glyndebourne.com
Post: Membership, Glyndebourne, Lewes, East Sussex BN8 5UU

Question: How long is a standard orchestra rehearsal session at Glyndebourne?

The two winners will be notified on Monday 18 February 2019. For terms and conditions visit glyndebourne.com
A new home for costumes and wigs

As the build of our new Production Hub draws to a close, Karen Anderson caught up with Head of Costume, Pauline Lecrass, to talk about the new working environment her team will soon enjoy.
Long before Pauline Lecrass joined Glyndebourne back in September 2006, the women’s costume and men’s tailoring teams had always worked separately, in different rooms, on the first floor of the old costume block. This is now about to change: one of the main features of the new Production Hub is one large, double aspect (169m²) workroom that will house ladies costume and tailoring in the same space. The senior cutters, costume administration, costume supervisors and Pauline herself will be just along the corridor; there will be a ‘designers’ space’ for all visiting creative teams to use; and just across the hall will be wigs – the other arm of Pauline’s department that was previously housed in a completely separate building.

Commenting on these changes Pauline says ‘the old building was designed with two separate workrooms so we just worked with it, and didn’t really question the layout of the rooms to be honest. But with the new building we were given the opportunity to move the costume makers and tailors into one big workroom. Bringing both teams together like this will have many benefits – skills and abilities, methods and techniques can all be shared more easily – and everyone will gain a wider understanding of all aspects of costume production which was not possible before with separate, smaller teams.’

The equipment and facilities will also be improved as Pauline explains: ‘we are really excited about the new tables, they will be vary-height, with 30cm adjustment – which means that they can be individually positioned to suit the height of the person working at the table. This will be a major change for us as we’ve been used to working at static workstations (often lifting tables and using blocks of wood under table legs to change the height) – it will be more comfortable and ergonomic.’ Adaptations to the working environment for existing equipment will also be a welcome change: ‘we will have a new extraction system above the steam presses, which will suck out the heat and moisture from the atmosphere. Our industrial equipment, primarily our button-holer, will be housed in a new small, sound-proofed room which will make a big difference to noise levels and we’ll have three purpose-built changing rooms for costume fittings. I can’t forget to mention the platform lift! For the first time we’ll have a lift from the ground level and the costume store to the new Production Hub, currently we have to carry everything up and downstairs – this will be a real game-changer for the whole department.’

For wigs, they too will have new vary-height tables, a new fitting room and backwash sink for colouring – and be in the same building as costume, make-up, props and carpentry for the first time. The old costume building will now be used for housing costumes in the current season’s repertoire and for storage (existing costumes are currently housed offsite so have to be collected every time they are used at Glyndebourne and for hires).

During Festival Society Members’ days in March and on guided tours of the building, Glyndebourne’s work on costume and wigs will be visible and accessible for the first time via the new mezzanine walk-way into the newly-completed Production Hub which will open in February 2019.

The new equipment for the Production Hub has been part funded by donations to the 2018 Annual Fund.
Lighting a revival

Any opera production is the product of close collaboration between the different members of a creative team, working together to deliver the director’s overall vision. Among the collaborators is the lighting designer, whose job is to use light to create the right atmosphere or mood on stage, with help from Glyndebourne’s lighting department. Kate Harvey spoke to Lighting Supervisor Dave Manion about working with external designers and how lighting is recorded and revived when a show returns to the Festival or Tour.

To help the lighting designer get started, the lighting department sends them a plan of the lights in the auditorium, including front-of-house, above and side of stage. This is known as the lighting rig. Using this plan, a designer can start to formulate their ideas and select which of the available lamps they wish to use. A key tells them what kind of fixture is available in the lighting rig, whether it has a gel-scroller that would enable colour change or CMY colour mixing.

‘About two to three months before it hits the stage we’ll really start nailing down what’s going to happen with the lighting rig,’ explains lighting supervisor, Dave Manion. ‘They’ll send us a plan of their idea and then they’ll liaise with us to finesse the design further. A new production is a new sandpit to play in. Lots of ideas get put on paper. You can start with a thousand lights and end up only using 500, or you start at 500 and end up at a thousand. I think it’s best to overcook and then slowly chip away until you get the shape you want; it seems to be a smoother process.

‘It’s our job to liaise with the lighting designer and also let them know of any restrictions,’ Dave continues. Those restrictions include space, budget, and the audience experience. ‘There are certain lighting designers that like very bright intense light, but those units can be very noisy because of the cooling fans needed’ says Dave. ‘A lot of those lighting designers want that coming from the front of house and we can’t allow that here because in the quiet moments you can hear the mechanics inside. We like to keep our equipment as quiet as possible, so we don’t ruin the experience for the audience.’

Plan in place, rehearsals begin, and the final lighting design emerges. It is the job of the lighting supervisor to record the finished design, so that the production can be successfully revived. Every Glyndebourne Festival is made up of a mix of new productions and returning favourites. Typically the responsibility of lighting a revival is given to the person who supervised the original lighting designer. They work from the meticulous records that were made when the show was first produced. ‘We have all the plans that we drew up the first time,’ explains Dave. ‘Everything’s kept, follow-spot cue sheets and on stage cues, lighting control show files.’

Record-keeping is aided by a piece of software called Moving Light Assistant which can read the information programmed into the lighting desk for each show and identify the presets, colours and moving lights that were used. As well as that, the team take a lot of photos.

‘We have photographs of the cues, photographs of positions and we use video as
well. So you’ve got all these different things to feed from. It can be five to ten years since you last did a show, so remembering what a show was like in your head is nigh on impossible.’

The importance of photography and video has grown, thanks to advances in technology. In the past, the team would have relied entirely on written descriptions of the look and feel of a show. And while photography, video and written records are important, the human eye is still vital. ‘It’s our job to have the eyes and the judgement to say whether something looks right or wrong,’ Dave confirms. ‘People think that when a show is revived you just focus the lights again, press ‘go’ on the lighting desk and it just works. It doesn’t. It still takes a good week or two of smoothing things out.’

A revival can present an opportunity for the lighting designer to make changes to the original lighting. ‘When we’re in the Festival situation and you’ve got five lighting sessions, a show is never going to be 100% perfect in our eyes,’ Dave says. ‘There’ll be something we didn’t quite get enough time on. So there’ll be an email conversation with the original lighting designer and they’ll say, ‘do you mind doing this or that to the scene?’’

On other occasions the revival director might request a change during the rehearsal process. ‘We’ll have to make that judgement but keep faithful to the original design,’ says Dave. ‘We’d never steer too far away from the original design, it’s not our job to do that.’

One of the main challenges for the lighting team is balancing the competing technical requirements of the six shows in a season. ‘When you’re in the Festival, you’ve got six shows to think about and four of them overlap each other. Once you start getting flying pieces in there, and walls and bits of set, and all the rest of it, you start running out of space pretty quickly.’

Festival 2019 features a lot of flying which means space above the stage will be at a premium. In recent weeks, as plans for the new productions have developed, meetings have taken place to discuss what implications there might be for delivering the technical requirements of the revival shows. Where necessary, accommodations are made to make sure that the lighting department can achieve the changeover from one production to another in the three hours available.

‘You have to have a little bit of give and take on positions so that everything is a little bit more slick between the changeovers.’ Having made these assessments, Dave is feeling confident about the productions he is overseeing in 2019: ‘The way that the shows are rigged and everything, they’re very achievable in how they originally were, so there shouldn’t be any problems.’

Look out for his work next summer when he will revive the lighting for Rinaldo and Il barbiere di Siviglia.

Kate Harvey is Glyndebourne’s Press Manager.
If the weather does warm up, watch out for the shoots of late flowering clematis appearing towards the end of February/beginning of March, which signals the time for pruning. Cut the stems back to six inches to a foot above the soil, just above the first pair of strong buds. We will be pruning our Clematis viticella ‘Prince Charles’ in the blue border to stop the plants becoming top-heavy, with long bare stems and all the flowers appearing above eye-level.

Take the opportunity in February to note what has survived the worst of the winter weather, or any plants which need attention to get them through any cold spells forecast by protecting with mulch or horticultural fleece. If any plants have been lost irrevocably, now is the time to be planning what to plant in their place.

If the weather is too cold to be outside, February is a good month for cleaning, servicing and maintaining all your garden machinery and tools. Other indoor jobs include sorting out the lily bulbs, choosing the largest of the bulbs from last year’s container plantings or bulbs lifted and taken undercover for the winter, and replanting them in containers with new potting compost.

Our ornamental grasses need attention in late February and early March. In the Urn Garden we comb our Stipa gigantea to remove the old stems and dead foliage rather than cut the plant back. The Miscanthus sinensis however, will be cut back hard to the base, and can also be split in the spring to create new plants and re-invigorate the old plant.

We will be undertaking tree work in this month too. Ash dieback disease has been identified in our coppiced ashwoods and so we will be removing trees and maintaining a watch on any ash trees in our public spaces. Sad though it is to lose trees to disease or weather damage, spring is the perfect time to look ahead, and replant and renew. It gives us the opportunity to introduce different coloured tree foliage to the landscape and we are going to be replanting with hornbeams, among other varieties, to give us catkins in future springs and glorious autumnal colour.

Head Gardener, Kevin Martin spoke to Vicky Skeet our Rights and Content Coordinator for this column.

Members Garden Tours will take place throughout Festival 2019, and can be booked through Box Office from 18 February.
How I spend the interval...

Danielle de Niese, who will sing the lead in our Festival 2019 production of *Cendrillon*, reveals what she does during the dinner interval of a performance at Glyndebourne.

As soon as the curtain comes down I head to my dressing room. This might sound strange but I often record my performances from my dressing room and then listen back to them in the interval... I think that it is very important to keep improving. I use the recordings throughout the run; I take notes and then have them at the side of the stage. ‘Never settle after the premiere’ that is part of my ethos.

At the start of the interval my dresser comes to get me out of my costume. We always change out of them at Glyndebourne. In any other opera house it would be OK, but it’s a dinner interval and food doesn’t mix well with wigs and costumes. Usually I will go to the Courtyard Cafe and join the queue of orchestra, chorus, dancers and singers. I try to only stop a little bit to talk and then take my meal back up to the dressing room and eat it quietly on my own. I would love to stay, but know I’d regret it if the second half didn’t go so well because I had stayed and talked and didn’t protect my voice.

Often my son will come to visit me. It is three years since I performed at Glyndebourne (in 2016’s *Il barbiere di Siviglia*) when he was still a baby. This year he will be four and I want him to embrace backstage life, as it is a life I love.

Quickly the first hour will have passed and then there is the half hour call. That is the end of the interval for us and the start of preparing for the second half of the performance. My dressers will come back and check if I am ready. My face has to be prepared to battle the heat and the sweat on stage. You could also have a different face, costume and wig for the second half, so there is a lot to do.

After letting my voice rest, I then re-vocalise. It is a luxury at Glyndebourne to be able to let your voice reboot and relax and have the break in the middle. I warm up by gently humming along to the music I am listening to in my headphones. The team at Glyndebourne are so used to me being in the zone with my music and constantly attached to my headphones, getting all tangled up and in the way. They will be pleased to know I have new wireless ones!

Throughout the run Sarah [Piper] and Sheila [Slaymaker], the heads of make-up and wigs pop in to check that everything is going well and that I am happy. They show such care and diligence. There is such a wonderful team of people who take care of me. There is a core group who are in the trenches with me – particularly my dresser, make-up artist and the wig staff. They are in the epicentre of my backstage life, they make everything so wonderful with their warmth and spirit – and stress free. It is a kind of ‘pas des quatre’ in the dressing room, a show of its own, and when it works I can go out on stage and fly.

The real cherry on the top is if Gus has about five seconds to pop in on his way back to his seat, say hello and wish me luck, and then I am back on stage!
Getting the most from your Membership

Throughout the year we’ll send you news and information relating to your Membership – such as your ticket application form and brochure, reminders about ballot dates and your annual subscription, and three editions of this newsletter.

If you would prefer to receive this newsletter by email please contact the Membership team.

We are here to help
You can reach the Membership team Monday to Friday, 10.00am – 5.00pm
+44 (0)1273 815 400
membership@glyndebourne.com

Don’t forget you can choose to receive more insights by email at glyndebourne.com/preferences

Glyndebourne News is edited by Karen Anderson
Front cover image: Guy Gravett

Glyndebourne Productions Ltd
Registered № 358266 England
Glyndebourne is a registered charity
Charity № 243877

Glyndebourne News is printed on FSC accredited paper stock using vegetable based inks. Printed by Treetop Design & Print

Information on the Festival and Tour, plus regularly updated information and insight into our year-round activity.

glyndebourneshop.com
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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY
Festival ticket booking
18 February: Second opportunity for Members to book
19 February: Second opportunity for Associate Members to book
25 February: Under 30s booking opens
3/4 March: Public booking opens online/by phone
8 & 9 March: Festival Members’ Days
23 April: Tour Members’ ticket ballot

MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO SEE OPERA ...
1-3 March: Agreed - new mainstage opera

Our Festival 2019 screenings (in cinemas and online)
30 June: Cendrillon (LIVE)
14 July: Il barbiere di Siviglia (Recorded live in 2016)
4 August: Die Zauberflöte (LIVE)

11 October – 7 December: Glyndebourne Tour 2019